

New Jersey Best Practices 1998-99 Application Community Based Instruction Program

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1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative, how it promotes high student achievement and how it can be replicated.

The Community Based Instruction Program (CBI Program) serves high school students with significant learning needs. This full year program meets daily for 2 hours and 15 minutes both in the classroom and in local community settings. The program is designed to provide typical life experiences in such places as the grocery store, the bank, the post office, restaurants and department stores. Unlike a scheduled field trip, each visit into the community is an occurrence that mirrors what the student and his/her family would routinely do in their daily life. The size of each instructional group is therefore kept small, one to two students, so that the class replicates a normal daily life occurrence. The students travel to these community settings on both Tuesday and Thursday.

The objectives of the Community Based Instruction Program are: 1) the students learn skills necessary to carry out typical life routines in the community, 2) the students learn related functional skills in the areas of reading, math, language, communication, and social interaction, and 3) the students learn skills necessary for the transition from their school life into their adult life.

The community settings are, whenever possible, consistent with those utilized by the student's family. A written survey is sent home during the first week of school. The parent/guardian lists the various community settings the family visits most often. The settings for Community Based Instruction Program are identified by means of this survey. In addition, the community settings are located within a seven-mile radius of the school.

Upon the return of the written survey, the students begin the CBI Program by visiting the three most frequented community settings to establish a pre-instructional baseline of known skills. This skill baseline begins the process of diagnostic teaching, which elaborates on what each student knows and what the environmental setting requires for successful participation. The design and instruction of the classroom activities are driven by the student's identified needs in the community settings and the student's Individual Educational Plan (IEP).

Often students with significant learning needs have difficulty generalizing skills from an artificially structured environment into the natural community setting. For this reason, the skills are taught in their naturally occurring environment, with the classroom being used as a resource for introducing, reinforcing, and practicing key concepts and vocabulary that will be utilized in the community setting. The success of the program is based on the student's ability to demonstrate his/her functional independence both in the classroom and in each community setting.

There is a true partnership between the school and the home. As part of their homework packet, the students are required to accomplish a variety of functional life skills at home, such as to make their bed, to set the table, and to feed a pet. The students also may complete an extra credit sheet whenever they visit a community setting with a parent or guardian. The parents and the staff from the high school often have the students shop for particular items while they are in the community.

The parents receive a weekly newsletter, which explains the week's activities both in the classroom and in the community setting. The newsletter, "The CBI Herald" is duplicated in color with feature articles from the school's speech / language pathologist and the school's social worker. The classroom teacher and the support staff collaborate lessons so that there is more generalization of language / communication skills and social skills from the therapy room into the classroom. The students' accomplishments are highlighted every week for confidence building purposes. This newsletter enables the parents to communicate and discuss the week's activities with their child. Finally, the next week's community word is introduced to the parents through this newsletter. This word always reflects what is being learned in each community setting.

Initially, the CBI teacher visited several community settings and introduced the program to the managers/owners of each establishment. As the program progressed, the students demonstrated successful community interaction with the employees. In turn, the employees gained an awareness of meeting the needs of individuals with significant learning needs. The program's design has resulted in the community becoming another instructional environment for the students.

The CBI Program continuously promotes high student achievement as demonstrated by each student's ability to perform independently in a variety of community settings. When the student is able to transfer these learned skills from school life into his/her home life, then the desired success is achieved.

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The school would be most pleased to share applicable forms, start-up procedures, and strategies with others. The CBI Program has evolved into a solid, structured new approach for the education of students with significant learning needs. Procedures, methods and results have been carefully documented and can be easily replicated by other schools.

2. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses and how they were identified. List the *Core Curriculum Content and Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards* addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses the standards.

The Community Based Instruction Program is open to all classified students who are experiencing a challenge in the traditional educational format setting. The program teaches students in the areas of functional reading, functional math, functional life skills and everyday communication and language on his/her own educational level both in the classroom and in the community. The student's IEP guides the work in the classroom, while an ecological inventory performed at the beginning of each setting guides the student's needs in the community. Students are referred to the program via special education teachers' and child study team members' recommendations.

The Community Based Instruction Program addresses the Core Curriculum Standards in six of the content areas (Visual and Performing Arts, Comprehensive and Physical Education, Language Arts Literacy, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies) as well as all five Cross - Content Workplace Readiness Standards. The CBI Program provides the opportunity for students with significant learning needs to demonstrate proficiency in the Core Curriculum Standards and Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards by means of functional experiences in settings outside the school walls. The skills that the students attain allow them to carry out their every day life situations independently with the focus always centered on transition from school life to adult life. All Standards are incorporated together and addressed in the following paragraphs.

The Visual and Performing Arts content domain is addressed by means of video taping the students in the community for purposes of evaluation and extended learning. The video taping allows the teacher and the parents to observe first hand how the student is participating in each community setting. In the classroom, the teacher and students discuss the students' participation level. The CBI staff assesses the tape with the thought of extending the functional academics to meet the student's needs. The students role-play certain community setting scenarios such as ordering a meal at various restaurant settings, and purchasing stamps at the post office.

The Comprehensive Health and Physical Education content domain is addressed by having the students independently maneuver themselves with a shopping cart through the store aisles. The students have difficulty assessing their body perimeter as it relates to other people walking through the store. The students are taught how to problem solve a situation where boxes are stacked in the middle of the aisle. The students are taught how to enter buildings correctly by means of finding the entrance door, opening the door (there are different door pulls/handles in each community setting), and stepping on the electronic mat. In the town center, the students are taught safety issues, such as walking safely as a pedestrian and reading pedestrian and traffic signs.

The Language Arts and Literacy content domain is addressed by having the students learn the functional words necessary to independently participate in the community. The students are taught how to read calendars, TV and movie listings, bus schedules, menus, package labels, restroom signs, store circulars, telephone books, and recipes. They are also taught how to fill out an application and a personal information sheet. The students are taught concepts as they relate to following directions, such as find the shampoo on the *top* shelf. The students are asked to follow multi-step directions, an essential skill needed for future employment. Each week the students are taught new vocabulary words as they apply to each visited community setting. For instance, while in the grocery store, the students learn vocabulary words such as receipt cashier, and produce. The students are always encouraged to ask employees questions about where to find an item in the store.

The Mathematics content domain is addressed by learning coin and bill counting, money management, telling time, reading prices, comparing prices of similar items, and rounding off to the next dollar value. The students are taught how to use a calculator for functional purposes and the computer for functional academic extension purposes, to read numbers as they apply to their social security number, telephone numbers, and street addresses, to purchase items from a retail store as well as from vending machines, and to make a telephone call from a pay telephone.

The Science content domain is addressed by problem solving functional situations in the community setting such as determining which is the best line to get in at the grocery store or department store. Choice making is a skill, which is continuously taught to the students whether in the grocery store, the restaurant, the library, or the department store. As

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stated before, the students are encouraged to make inquiries of the employee staff in every setting.

The Social Studies content domain is addressed by teaching the identification and description of each community setting to the students. For instance, the students learn what the library, the grocery store, and department store facilities include. The job description of the employees of each of these community settings is also discussed with the students. The employees' job descriptions, as well as our community visits, are informative and can be useful for the student's future employment possibilities. As the students are transported by school bus into the community settings, certain town buildings and town facilities are noted and discussed so the students can get a sense of the total community environment.

3. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met.

The three objectives of the Curriculum Based Instruction Program are assessed by means of observation in the areas of community participation and functional academic participation. The CBI Program continuously promotes the student's achievement as demonstrated by each student's ability to perform independently in a variety of community settings. When the student is able to transfer these learned skills from school life into his/her home life the desired objectives will have been achieved.

At the beginning of each new community setting visit, the student is evaluated by means of an ecological inventory. This ecological inventory is an elaborate task analysis of the functional skills necessary to complete successful participation in each community setting. This inventory is also used again at the concluding visit to chart the student's acquisition of skills in each community setting.

During each community visit, the student is additionally evaluated on her/his individual goals in the following areas: 1) functional reading, 2) language and communication skills, 3) functional math, 4) social interaction with peers and community setting staff and 5) gross motor skills for that setting. This assessment sheet which is part of each student's CBI notebook rates the student's performance from a perfect score of 5 to a base level score of 1. These scores are tabulated and then transferred on a 100 point base value into the class Community Based Instruction grade book.

Upon returning to the school, the student also completes a log sheet. This log sheet asks the student to state the date and the day of the community visit, the type of community setting visited the name of the particular community setting, the items purchased, and the items observed while the student visited each setting. This sheet enables the student to retrieve factual information that he/she observed in the community setting.

The parents also provide additional observational data on their son and daughter's performance outside of school hours in a variety of community settings. This observation is documented in the form of an extra credit sheet, which is returned to the classroom teacher. These extra credit sheets are used to augment a student's quarterly grade.